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THE FIRST WEEK AT HIGH SCHOOL, OR WHAT TO DO WITH MY NEW CLASS IN COMPOSITION

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Last fall, in New York City, a series of conferences was arranged between the teachers of grades seventh and eighth and the high-school teachers. The purposes of these conferences were to make the transition from grammar school to high school easier for the child. Ways and means were cited by each side in the hope that both would benefit by the conference work.

The English conferences were spirited, and able representatives discussed the reasons for the enormous dropping off, of the pupils in A and B high school.

The teacher of an 8B grade is bound to hear much that is going on in the first year of high school from the pupils who have just entered. They return daily and talk things over on a very different footing than they could have talked while in your class.

It is from these individual conferences that this report is based.

These ejaculations are familiar to any one who has questioned the new high-school pupil.

1. "I like my teacher but I'm not sure just what she wants me to do."
2. "We have a theme to write for Friday." "What is a theme?"
3. "Our Spanish teacher says we know nothing about writing letters."
4. "Do we need our English note books now?"

When these questions are forthcoming, it is apparent the high-school teacher keeps herself too much aloof from the individual child.

She has high notions as to what a boy, entering high school, should know. Her standards are set and he should fit her standards. So far so good. Let's see how she starts in on attaining her standards. She has assumed that each pupil has covered the assigned course of study in the elementary school and that he should be able to take her assignments just as she dictates them, to study the new literature without individual help, and to prepare his written papers without guidance.

The high-school teacher has a legal status. She understands her work so she proceeds. She is young, fresh from a brilliant college career. She may be experienced and removed by several stages from the necessities of this fourteen-year-old boy by the work required for her last thesis for A.M. or Ph.D.

The adjustments to the high-school course are not unlike the problems which the 8B teacher confronts when she receives children from several 8A grades and the usual transfers from parochial schools, and from schools in other cities, and from local schools.

The first duty is to classify the class or classes and start on the work needed by the greatest number, whether it is high-school work or sixth-grade work.

With this idea in mind and with the welfare of the children at heart, this plan was conceived and tried.

AIMS

1. To acquaint the child with the form and organization required by the high school.
2. To learn of the individual need of the individual child as soon as possible.
3. To arrive at an understanding with the child as to what he needs to make him more efficient in writing.
4. To give the teacher a classified list upon which to base her general and special conferences.
5. To assure the pupil by this working plan that he is checked up often and that no lapses are allowed.
6. To hold him responsible for what is taught in the current year.
7. To give necessary drill exercises to the individual.

AIM 1.

This is the first day of the new term. Printed sheets are given out, containing information concerning the form required by the school.

These requirements fit the needs of the New York City schools.

1. Use A.—for themes—No. 10 pad.
B.—for letters—Letter Size.
C.—for paragraph work No. 13 pad.
2. Use ink for all work which is to be handed in.
3. Use one side of the paper only.
4. In writing use muscular movement and use the forms required by the Board of Education.
5. Head all papers according to the prescribed form.
6. A. Write the subject on the first line.
B. Space it well.
C. Capitalize important words.
7. Skip a line.
8. A. Indent each paragraph by beginning one inch in from the left hand margin.
B. Make the other lines full.
C. Consult the dictionary freely on syllabification.

AIMS 2-3-4-5, and 6

The Daily Paragraph is recommended to cover the above aims and the plan is given here.

Place on the board four subjects.

1. How I Spent A Dollar.
2. Stealing an Auto Ride.
3. Leaving the Summer Resort.
4. Courage.

The pupils are asked to write a paragraph on any given subject. The time allowed is five minutes.

These papers are then collected and read by the teacher. She decides who are the most promising pupils and she instructs them about her plans and appoints them monitors.

In a class of forty-five pupils, three monitors will attend to fifteen pupils each. The monitors are to give out the papers at a given time, collect the paragraphs, and follow this plan:—

Arrange all papers and see that Aim I is carried out in each case. Check each omission and at a specified time and see that the owner corrects as designated. Simply write "Form Wrong." This being done, select any three papers and place them in the folder along with the six from the other two monitors. Each monitor has fifteen names on his section sheet arranged as sample. He checks the three names. The teacher corrects and grades the nine papers and calls the children to her desk one at a time, at noon, after school, between classes, or during study periods. She becomes acquainted with her new pupil, points out his errors, finds something to praise, and requests correction. The person-

ality of the teacher counts here to a high degree. "Have you an English note book?" "You made this same mistake" pointing to the error, "in 8A or 8B." "You've forgotten your rule on possessions," etc.

She gives the papers back to the three monitors and they enter the grade opposite the name and under the day.

Tuesday. The Monitors do as before, but they take out the three papers which were corrected on Monday. They check all papers for Aim I and note the number of errors or omissions on the chart. They turn all remaining papers face down and select the three samples and place them, as before, for correction. They return to the owners all others which need corrections in form and get them back for filing.

This idea of facing down, prevents a monitor from choosing a certain paper for any other motive. He cannot assure John Smith that his paper will be chosen Tuesday, so that John may be relieved for the rest of the week.

Wednesday. By this time the teacher has had time to classify the errors, and she will find material upon which to base her language lesson or her preliminary drill. She'll find the "run-on" sentence and by drill teach the pupil the correct form.

She will give further drill on such items as the following:

Write a simple sentence. What does it contain? Compound the subject. Compound the predicate. Write a compound sentence. Note the difference in these forms and this form,—(run-on sentence on the board.) How may you test a simple sentence? A compound sentence? Correct the one on the board.

Do the same things to correct "clause-use" for sentences. Give exercises to test the distinction between a clause and sentence. Select a list of possessives to be used in sentences and give samples daily until the pupils use them correctly.

For example—In the following sentences use both the singular and plural possessives.

In the ——— department they are having a sale.

Man — Woman — Lady — Child — Gentleman.

Answer paper.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------|
| 1. S.—Man's. | 3. S.—Lady's. |
| P.—Men's. | P.—Ladies. |
| 2. S.—Woman's. | 4. S.—Child's. |
| P.—Women's. | P.—Children's. |
| 5. S.—Gentleman's. | |
| P.—Gentlemen's. | |

Make possessive Smith, Gray & Co.

For short disconnected sentences, give a lesson or synthesis. Maxwell's Advanced Grammar has several good exercises.

Assign topics and do as before. By this time the teacher will have discovered some paragraphs which are particularly excellent. These ought to be copied on the board or handed around for samples.

Select a few poor samples and have them corrected from black-board copies.

Consult Hill's "Beginnings of Rhetoric and Composition." Place sample paragraphs on the board. Explain which form is better and why.

Thursday. Explain that a paragraph has a central thought with relative thoughts explaining it.

Show faulty paragraphs with two central thoughts and instruct the pupil how to make two paragraphs out of the written work.

Assign topics and ask the pupils to plan two paragraphs, one to be written to-day, the other Friday.

Ask them to prepare the reader for the second paragraph by the last sentence in the first paragraph thus establishing coherence.

Friday. The topics are assigned from Thursday and the work proceeds as before.

When the teacher finds on Wednesday or Thursday that a child is poor to a startling degree, have the monitor give all of his daily paragraphs to you for correction.

Assign special work to this deficient pupil. For instance, he may hand in a paragraph every morning before school. He may copy paragraphs on the board. He may change the sample paragraph into his own words. He may do an exercise a day based on his needs. He must be made to realize that he is a special student in English and cannot go on with the A. B.-, and B. students until he shows signs of mastery of the essentials in writing.

For these special students I recommend the small spelling note book for daily paragraphs assigned for home work.

The constant drill on common errors, and the constant requirement of quick and accurate expression make the pupil more efficient.

No thought has been given to theme development in these pages. The central idea is to obtain written samples of the child's writing and make the foundation of his work in

composition more accurate from the grammar, language, spelling, and writing standpoints.

It requires five minutes to write the paragraph and not more than ten minutes for the teacher to correct the nine given to her each day. The monitors will attend to the form and organization.

The children like the element of chance in being taken any day and they look for the Monitor's ratings on form and the teacher's grades which are read each Friday.

For paragraph topics, consult Maxwell Johnson's *Composition*, Book I, or Sykes' "Composition" or "McKeown's Composition," Books I or II or the Newton list of theme subjects.

TEACHER'S RECORD

	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thur.	Fri.
	1	0	1	0	2
John Abbe		B			
	0	1	1	1	1
James Bostel	B+				
	3	2	3	2	0
Joe Cary			B+		
	4	3	2	1	0
Art Done	B				
	0	1	2	1	0
Harry Eaton		B			
	1	1	1	1	2
Albert Fogg				B	
	4	0	2	2	0
Ted Gray	C	C	C	C	C
	3	2	1	2	1
Ned Harris				B	
	2	1	1	1	0
John Inglis					B+
	0	0	1	0	0
Frank King					B
	1	1	1	1	0
Tom Leach				B+	
	3	3	1	2	1
Cyrus Mosses		C	C	C	C
	2	2	0	1	0
Robert Nockle			B+		
	4	3	3	2	1
Tim O'Maley					B
	0	0	1	0	1
Charles Park			B		

Figures represent number of errors in form.

Letters represent the teachers rating.

Notice that when a pupil's work is particularly poor, his work is corrected every day and special board drill is given to him along the lines indicated by his papers.

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